

1832-1850 The first plots

1832 is an important date in the history of the site. This is when Charles James Blomfield, the Bishop of London, ensured the enclosure of the land for use as allotments. The original paperwork is in the London Metropolitan Archive. It is a little difficult to read but with the later 1909 transcript copy, we think this is the best transcription available:

" I Charles James, Bishop of London as Lord of the Manor of Ealing otherwise Zealing, In the county of Middlesex, do hereby consent, so far as by law I may or can, to the enclosure of

ALL THAT piece or parcel of waste or common land or ground called Ealing Dean common within the said Manor, containing 20 acres 2 roods and 16 perches or thereabouts according to the plan hereunder annexed in order that the same may be occupied solely in allotments of not more than one rood to each person, by poor parishioners of the said parish of Ealing, to be appointed by a committee of management, of whom, the vicar for the time being always to be one:- the said allotment to be cultivated with the spade. Provided nevertheless that no person or persons be permitted to work on the same ground on the Lords day, on pain of forfeiture of his or their occupation.

Provided also that no nuisance or inconvenience be occasioned thereby to the public, especially to the occupiers of houses, upon or near to the said common - and that a sufficient quantity of the common be reserved for convenient roads and footpaths and also frontages to houses if necessary.

WITNESS my hand and seal this 27th day of November in the year of our Lord 1832

C.J. London"

The Bishop tells us that each person should be allocated no more than one Rood - which is about a quarter of an acre or 10,890 sq ft, approximately 1,011 sq metres. Today we only rent out half-plots to newcomers - around 5 poles or rods 8m x 15m = 120 sq m.

The Bishop's letter also mentions that the plots should go to 'poor Parishioners' which seem like a Christian and altruistic thing to do. However, he may have had other motives, according to Blomfield's biographer Malcolm Johnson. "The Bishop thought that the Church should provide rival attractions, such as men's clubs, and his Ealing allotments laid out in 1832 were an attempt to substitute his beloved gardening for drinking as a pastime."